PART ONE

EPIC AND ELEGIAC POETRY

CHAPTER ONE

HOMER

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Introduction. Time awareness

Is time important in Homer? Some fifty years ago Hermann Fränkel gave a negative answer in a celebrated article on the conception of time in archaic Greek literature:

In general, the concept of time is hardly developed in Homer. The narrative drifts by in calm, continuous journeys. It is surrounded by the fields of time, which are monotonous, indifferent, and without substance, as when a column marches through a broad, open steppe without any roads. Together with the events and through them, time moves on unnoticed, like the path which one creates in high grass.¹

Fränkel's thesis rests on the fact that the Homeric epics do not contain abstract reflections on time, such as we find later in Pindar or in tragedy. But it would seem that the time awareness in Homer is greater than he suggests.

More than once the narrator makes clear that there is a significant difference between 'mortals such as they are now' and the 'semi-divine' heroes and heroines of the past he sings about (e.g. *Il.* 5.302–304),² while his characters occasionally look forward to their role as 'subjects of song for men of future generations' (*Il.* 6.357–358).³ In this respect Bakhtin speaks of 'the epic world of the absolute past', 'walled off from all subsequent times by an impenetrable boundary'.⁴ I would modify this view by pointing at the abundant similes, which in their omnitemporality offer a bridge between past and present: thus 'the west wind stirs a deep cornfield with its coming, and the standing crop bows

¹ Fränkel 1960: 6 (my translation).

² Cf. *Il.* 12.381–385, 447–449; 20.285–287. This type of passage does not occur in the *Odyssey*. The qualification 'semi-divine' occurs at *Iliad* 12.23.

³ Other examples: *Od.* 3.203–204; 8.579–580; 24.196–202.

⁴ Bakhtin 1981: 16.

its ears in the fury of the blast' (*Il.* 2.147–148) in the time of the heroes, of the narrator and his narratees, and, for that matter, of us, modern readers.

Indeed, characters show a constant awareness of time, of the near past, as when Helen regretfully recalls having come along with Paris (*Il.* 3.173–175); the more remote past, as when Phoenix tells the tale of Meleager, 'a story of long ago, no recent thing' (*Il.* 9.527); the near future, when Penelope fears for the life of Telemachus, who has left on a ship (*Od.* 4.817–823); or the remote future, when Tiresias reveals to Odysseus the manner of his death (*Od.* 11.134–137).

But even the present does not escape the notice of either narrator or characters. Thus the narrator explicitly marks the advent of nearly every day and, in the case of drawn-out days, of parts of the day; for example, 'For as long as it was morning and the holy day was waxing, the weapons thrown by each side reached their mark, and men kept falling. But when the sun had straddled the centre of the sky, then Zeus opened out his golden scales' (*Il.* 8.66–69).⁵ At times the characters also show an explicit, indeed emotional, awareness of the passing of time, for example when Odysseus eagerly anticipates the moment the Phaeacians will convey him home: 'he turned his head again and again to look at the shining sun eager for it to go down. And as when a man longs for his meal, for whom his wine-coloured oxen drag the compact plow across the field, and welcome the light of the sun for him, so as to allow him to go to dinner, ... in like wise the sunset was welcome to Odysseus' (*Od.* 13.28–35).⁶

These few passages already suggest that time is important for the Homeric narrator and the characters alike. Let us now turn to time as a narratological category, starting with an important aspect, that of the order in which the events of the fabula are presented in the story.

Order

The first step in any discussion of the various aspects of order in a narrative text is to determine what constitutes the main *story*. In the *Iliad* the main story consists of 51 days, which lie between Chryses' arrival in the Greek camp and the burial of Hector; while in the *Odyssey*

⁵ Other examples: *Il.* 11.84–91; *Od.* 7.288; 13.93–95.

⁶ Another example is *Iliad* 8.487–488.

we move in 41 days from the council of the gods in which the ‘ban’ on Odysseus’ return is lifted to the reconciliation between Odysseus and the families of the suitors.⁷ If we consider the *fabula* of the *Iliad* to be the ten years of the Trojan war (cf. 2.329–330), and that of the *Odyssey* the twenty years of Odysseus’ absence from Ithaca (cf. 2.175), we clearly see how the Homeric narrator has employed the *in medias res* technique. Rather than starting at the beginning, Paris’ judgment and abduction of Helen (explicitly marked as ‘the beginning’ of all misery in *Iliad* 3.100 and 22.116) and Odysseus’ departure for Troy (evoked in a mixture of invention and truth in *Odyssey* 19.221–257), he has chosen a point in the middle, or rather, near the end, just before the fall of Troy and Odysseus’ return home. The important choice of the beginning of the story is thematized in the proems: ‘Sing ... from the moment when first’ and ‘Sing ... from some point onwards’.⁸ Through the *in medias res* the narrator not only starts at a dramatic moment, but also, concentrating on a short period of time, gives his narrative thematic unity: in the *Iliad* the wrath of Achilles, in the *Odyssey* the reunion of Odysseus with his country, family, and people.

The endings of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have always seemed less spectacular, but upon closer inspection we see that there is closure. This is effected by ring composition (in the *Iliad* a divine assembly and a father coming to the enemy camp to release his child, in the *Odyssey* divine councils and Ithacan assemblies); by a curtain call of the major characters in *Iliad* 23–24 (notably the Games) and *Odyssey* 23–24; and by the presence of natural closural motifs such as burial (of Hector, the suitors, and, in embedded narrative, Achilles) and reconciliation (between Priam and Achilles and—temporarily—the Greeks and the Trojans; and between Odysseus and the families of the dead suitors).⁹

Despite this concentration on one specific phase of the Trojan War or Odysseus’ return, the narrator manages to include the whole picture. He does so in two ways. The first device is the so-called ‘symbolic parallel’, the inclusion of scenes which resemble and thus evoke events from the beginning or end of the *fabula*.¹⁰ This technique is found

⁷ Hellwig 1964: 40–45 and (for the *Iliad*) Latacz 1996: 108–119; Clark 2001; (for the *Odyssey*) de Jong 2001a: 587–588.

⁸ For the rhetoric of the seemingly arbitrary beginning in *Odyssey* 1.10 see de Jong 2001a: 7.

⁹ Whitman 1958: 249–284; Taplin 1992: 251–284; de Jong 2001a: Introduction to book 24.

¹⁰ Heubeck 1958.

mainly in the *Iliad*: we may think of the catalogue of ships, the duel between Menelaus and Paris, the view from the wall, and Helen at the insistence of Aphrodite going to bed with Paris, all of which evoke the beginning of the war; and Patroclus' funeral, which suggests the death and funeral of Achilles. At times the narrator helps his narratees to see the symbolic parallel, for example in the above mentioned love-making scene, where he makes Paris say to Helen: 'Never before has desire so enveloped my heart, not even on that first time when I stole you away from lovely Sparta and sailed off with you in my seafaring ships' (*Il.* 3.442–444). The second way in which the whole Trojan War and Odysseus' return are evoked is through external analepses and prolepses, which will be discussed in the following sections.

*Analepses*¹¹

Having established the main story, we may next investigate the anachronies, or changes in the order of presentation, vis-à-vis the fabula. I start with *narratorial* analepses. The *internal* analepses are infrequent and brief, and nearly always *repeat* events told earlier, for example Achilles' wrath (*Il.* 2.688–689; cf. 1.488–492), a hero's wound (*Il.* 11.809; cf. 11.581–592), or Calypso giving Odysseus clothes (*Od.* 5.321, 372; cf. 5.264).¹² They seem to serve as reminders for the benefit of the narratees. Occasionally a special effect is intended, as when the narrator remarks that the Trojans, chased by Achilles, are running out over the plain towards the city, 'where the Greeks had been driven back terror-struck on the day before, when glorious Hector was raging' (*Il.* 21.4–5). Another memorable example occurs exactly halfway through the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus' sufferings thus far are recapitulated, just as he is about to return home to face his final challenge (*Od.* 13.89–92).

The technique of the *completing* internal analepsis is only rarely employed, for example in *Odyssey* 5.276–277, where Odysseus is watching the stars as he sails, 'for so Calypso, bright among goddesses, had told him to make his way over the sea, keeping the Great Bear on his left

¹¹ Cf. Hellwig 1964: 46–53; Kullmann 1968; de Jong [1987] 2004: 81–90; S. Richardson 1990: 100–108; Reichel 1994 (though his category of cross-references includes more than analepses).

¹² Other examples: *Il.* 2.771–773; 5.795; 13.347–350, 679; 16.511–512; 23.291–292; *Od.* 13.125–127.

hand'. Rather than recounting Calypso's nautical advice at the 'proper' moment, when she sends Odysseus off (5.263–268), the narrator inserts it here, in the form of an analepsis, at the moment when Odysseus actually uses it.¹³ We might also analyse this as an instance of delay or paralipsis.

More often the narrator inserts *external* analepses, mainly to fill in the background on characters; for example, '[Euryclea], daughter of Ops, the son of Peisenor, whom once (*tēn pote*) Laertes bought with his own possessions when she was still in her first youth, and he gave twenty oxen for her, and he favored her in her house as much as his own devoted wife, but never slept with her, for fear of his wife's anger' (*Od.* 1.429–433).¹⁴ I note in passing the combination of a relative pronoun + *pote* which introduces the analepsis, a combination which will become the characteristic marker of embedded narratives in Pindar (→). Biographical analepses are never exhaustive but always focus on the information necessary for the scene at hand; thus, when we hear that Mentor had once been the companion of Odysseus and that when boarding his ship Odysseus had entrusted his household to him (*Od.* 2.226–227), we are prepared for the speech in which he reminds the Ithacans of their king, and criticizes them for letting the suitors destroy Odysseus' household.

A specific Iliadic use of this type of external analepsis is the 'obituary' of a warrior, inserted at the moment he is killed; for example, 'So there he [Iphidamas] fell and slept a bronze sleep, a pitiable man, far from his wedded wife, helping his people, far from his bride, of whom he had known no joy, and much he had given to get her: he had given a hundred cattle first, and promised a further thousand, goats and sheep mixed, from his immense flocks at pasture' (*Il.* 11.241–245). Striving for a pathetic effect the narrator selects those elements of a hero's life which make his death most sad.¹⁵

External analepses are also used when the narrator introduces objects which are about to play an important role in the story: for example, the history of Agamemnon's scepter, which is significantly—and perhaps ironically—presented at the moment he is about to make a far

¹³ Other examples: *Il.* 8.81–86; 12.6–9; *Od.* 8.448; 16.411–412; 22.327–328.

¹⁴ Other examples: *Il.* 2.547–551, 690–693; 11.104–106, 123–125; *Od.* 15.225–255; 17.292–295; 18.322–325.

¹⁵ Other examples: *Il.* 4.474–478; 5.60–64, 543–553; 6.21–26; 11.222–230; 13.364–369, 428–433, 663–670; 15.431–432; 16.572–576; 21.141–143. Cf. Griffin 1980: 103–143.

from royal speech (*Il.* 2.101–108), or the long analepsis on Odysseus' bow, which informs the narratees that it once belonged to the mythical archer Eurytus and had been given to Odysseus as a guest-gift, and thereby assures them that it will be an effective weapon of Odysseus against the suitors, who abuse the laws of hospitality (*Od.* 21.13–41).¹⁶

It should be observed that such external analepses introducing characters and objects may be inserted at their first appearance in the narrative, as in the case of Euryclea mentioned above, but may also be reserved for the moment when such a character is about to play an important role. In the case of Polydamas, for example, it is only when he makes his major warning speech, which Hector is—fatally—going to reject, that he is given an introduction (*Il.* 18.250–252). At this point, it may be instructive to contrast the narrative strategy of the secondary narrator Odysseus in his long travel-story (*Od.* 9–12). He does provide background information on the characters and objects of his story at the start of a new episode, even before actually confronting those characters or using those objects. Thus, in the case of the Cyclops adventure, he paints a negative portrait of the Cyclopes at the moment of his *arrival* in their country (9.107–115) and describes the special wine which he will eventually use to inebriate and thereby incapacitate Polyphemus, at the moment he *sets off* to meet his as yet unknown opponent (9.197–211). In this way he creates suspense and elicits admiration.

I now turn to *actorial* analepses. *Internal* analepses are usually short and repeating, for example when an angry Ares complains to Zeus about Athena, who is setting up Diomedes against Aphrodite and himself (*Il.* 5.883–885), events which had been just narrated (793–861).¹⁷ But occasionally we find longer instances, such as when Achilles tells his mother Thetis about the quarrel with Agamemnon which has led to his wrath (*Il.* 1.370–392), or when Odysseus tells the Phaeacian royal couple how he arrived at their island and palace (*Od.* 7.241–257).¹⁸ In the *Odyssey* we find a number of small-scale *completing* internal analepses, when a character recalls an event which had previously been presented by the narrator and adds new information. An example is to be found in *Odyssey* 4.653–657, when Noemon, informing the suitors

¹⁶ Other examples: *Il.* 6.290–292; 22.470–472; *Od.* 14.7–22. Cf. Griffin 1980: 1–49.

¹⁷ Other examples: *Il.* 5.206–208; 8.371–372; 15.75–77; 17.35–37; 21.396–398; *Od.* 5.13–20; 16.227–234; 23.74–77.

¹⁸ Other examples: *Il.* 11.61–65; 18.432–456 (combined with an external analepsis); *Od.* 7.241–257 (combined with an external analepsis); 19.273–283; 20.128–144; 23.40–51; 24.125–185.

of Telemachus' secret departure, says that at that time he also saw Mentor (whom the narratees know to be Athena) go on board, but that he later saw him again on Ithaca. Neither Noemon's perception of 'Mentor'/Athena nor of the real Mentor had been recorded by the narrator.¹⁹

More often characters refer in *external* analepses to a past which lies outside the boundaries of the main story: (in the *Iliad*) to events from earlier in the Trojan war (e.g. Odysseus recalling the favourable omen explained by Calchas in Aulis, 2.299–330), to episodes from their life before the Trojan expedition (notably Nestor recalling deeds of valour from his youth; e.g. 1.260–273), or to exploits by heroes from the past (e.g. Meleager, 9.527–599);²⁰ (in the *Odyssey*) to events from the Trojan war or the return of the various other Troy-veterans (Helen recalling an incognito visit to Troy by Odysseus, 4.242–264; Agamemnon telling Achilles about his own burial, 24.37–92), to life on Ithaca before Odysseus' departure (Penelope recalling how Odysseus once helped Antinous' father, 16.424–430), or to heroes from the past (Penelope comparing her fate to that of Pandareus' daughters, who just before their marriage end up in the Underworld, 19.518–523).²¹ In comparison with the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* here shows a development in narrative technique, in that the ten years of Odysseus' return is recounted for its greater part at one go: the four-book long external analepsis told by Odysseus in *Odyssey* 9–12.²²

External actorial analepses are unfalsifiable for the narratees, since they do not have the narrator's version for purposes of comparison. The many lying tales which Odysseus recounts in the *Odyssey* are not a problem, since they are explicitly marked as 'false things that resemble true ones' (*Od.* 19.203). However, a notoriously less clear-cut case is Penelope's recollection of Odysseus' instructions to her on his departure for Troy (18.257–271): did he really tell her that, if he did not return, she should remarry when Telemachus started to grow a beard, or is this story another of her tricks to avoid such a remarriage? In my view, this time Penelope is sincere in her intention to remarry, but invents

¹⁹ Another example: *Od.* 22.154–156.

²⁰ Other examples: (Trojan war) *Il.* 3.205–224; 6.435–437; 11.104–106; 20.90–96, 187–194; 21.57–59, 76–82; (Nestor) 7.132–156; 11.671–761; 23.629–643; (Phoenix) 9.447–984. Cf. Alden 2000.

²¹ Other examples: (Ithaca) *Od.* 1.255–264; 4.341–344; 19.221–257; 23.190–201; 24.114–119; (mythical past) 5.121–128; 21.295–304.

²² There are three minor other 'instalments': *Od.* 3.153–364; 4.555–560; 7.244–260.

this anecdote in order to convince the suitors of her sincerity, and hence to elicit gifts from them.²³ Some scholars have also wanted to see Odysseus' long travel story in *Odyssey* 9–12 as an invention, but here the narrator reinforces its reliability at various points: notably in his proem, where he refers to the slaughtering of Helius' cattle on Thrinacia (1.7–9).²⁴

An interesting phenomenon is that actorial analepses, whether internal or external, are occasionally presented in the form of embedded focalization rather than speech. Most instances are brief, such as '[Achilles scrutinizes Hector's body to find the most vulnerable place] All the rest of the body was covered by his bronze armour, *which he had stripped from mighty Patroclus when he killed him*' (*Il.* 22.322–323);²⁵ it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that this is what flashes through Achilles' mind when he looks at Hector. Once the Odyssean narrator inserts a very long example, the external analepsis on Odysseus' scar, which was inflicted on him in his youth by a boar (*Od.* 19.393–466). I take this passage to be focalized by his old nurse Euryclea:²⁶ at the moment she recognizes the scar the story behind it flashes through her mind.

Prolepses

Both narrator and characters are wont to make prolepses,²⁷ which range from explicit ones (e.g. Zeus telling Hera that 'glorious Hector will kill Patroclus', *Il.* 15.68) to implicit ones (e.g. where Hector is compared to a boar or lion, whose 'courage kills him', *Il.* 12.41–50), to mere seeds (e.g. when Patroclus does *not* take along Achilles' Pelian spear at *Iliad* 16.140–144; this hints at the fact that he is no real second Achilles, but also allows Achilles later to use this very spear to kill the murderer of Patroclus, Hector, *Il.* 22.133–135, 326–327).

Let me start with the *narratorial* prolepses. The *internal* prolepses

²³ For a detailed discussion and secondary literature see de Jong 2001a: ad 18.250–283.

²⁴ Cf. S. Richardson 1996.

²⁵ Other examples: *Il.* 5.319–320; 11.111–112; 24.479; *Od.* 13.125–127; 23.310–341 (indirect speech); 24.424.

²⁶ For discussion and scholarship (including Auerbach [1946] 1953) see de Jong 1999, to which should now be added Köhnken 2003 (who attributes the analepsis to the narrator).

²⁷ Cf. Duckworth 1933; Hellwig 1964: 54–58; de Jong [1987] 2004: 81–91; S. Richardson 1990: 132–139; and Reichel 1994.

inform the narratees about developments within the story; for example, when Dolon sets out to spy on the Greeks, the narrator reveals ‘but in fact he was never to return from the ships and to bring his report back to Hector’ (*Il.* 10.336–337); the fulfillment follows immediately afterwards, when Dolon encounters Odysseus and Diomedes and is killed (339–468). This prolepsis is typically made with the help of the verb *mellō*, which adds a note of fatality to the future.²⁸ As this example makes clear, the prolepsis not only informs but also creates a certain effect. Here it stresses that Dolon’s endeavour was doomed from the beginning and hence that the optimism with which he undertook it (10.319–327) was ill-founded, a blindness which is occasionally noted explicitly by the narrator in the form of a narratorial comment (*nēpios* ‘fool’). This special effect is all the more clear in the case of the repetition of prolepses. The Homeric narrator repeatedly anticipates the major events of his story—the deaths of Patroclus, Hector, or the suitors—thus underscoring the importance of the event, creating suspense, pathos (in the case of Hector and Patroclus), or glee (in the case of the suitors).

The effect of narratorial prolepses depends to a large degree on the fact that their information reaches the narratees, but not the characters. Thus in *Odyssey* 20.390–394, just prior to Odysseus’ bloody revenge, the unsuspecting merriness of the suitors is effectively contrasted with the grim determination of the avengers Odysseus and Athena: ‘[the suitors] were laughing aloud as they prepared a dinner that was sweet and staying, for they had made a very big sacrifice. But there could not be a meal that was more unpleasant than this one, such was to be the attack that the powerful man and the goddess would make on them.’

When we turn to *external* narratorial prolepses, it appears that the *Iliad* contains only a handful, most of them concerning the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy.²⁹ A lengthy and remarkable one is *Iliad* 12.3–35, where the narrator relates how the wall around the Greek camp (erected in 7.433–441), after the fall of Troy and the departure of the Greeks, was destroyed by Poseidon and Apollo with the assistance of natural forces.³⁰ This glimpse into the future (which for the narrator

²⁸ Other examples: *Il.* 12.113–117; 13.602–603; 16.460–461; 17.497–498; 20.466; 21.47–48; (death of Patroclus:) 11.604; 16.46–47, 249–252, 685–691, 693, 787; *Od.* (death of suitors:) 17.364; 18.155–156; 20.392–394; 21.98–99, 418; (varia:) *Od.* 24.470–471.

²⁹ Death of Achilles: 17.197; 24.85–86; return of Philoctetes: 2.274–275; fall of Troy: *Il.* 22.410–411.

³⁰ Discussion in Reinhardt 1961: 267–269 and Scodel 1982.

is already the past) has a pathetic effect: we find ourselves in the middle of fierce fighting around this very wall, but are reminded that one day there will be no trace of the gruesome battles fought and the many lives lost. The narrator of the *Odyssey* never refers to events outside his main story: with the return of Odysseus and the happy reunion with his family the story has come to an end.

Turning now to the characters, we note that they are much more inclined than the narrator to make *external* prolepses, for example when Priam foresees the fall of Troy and his own death (*Il.* 22.66–76); Achilles' mother, many other people, and even his horses foresee his death, and Tiresias reveals to Odysseus how he must pacify Poseidon, and how he will die (*Od.* 11.121–137).³¹ Recalling that most of the external analepses concerning Troy and Odysseus' *nostos* were also made by characters, we may conclude that the way in which Homer, though concentrating in his main stories on some fifty or forty days, succeeds in evoking the entire Trojan war and Odysseus' *nostos* consists in making his characters look backward and forward.³²

Most of the *internal* actorial prolepses take the form of plans and fearful or optimistic expectations; for example, (Achilles to Hector in *Iliad* 22.270–272) 'But I tell you there is no escape for you any longer, but soon Pallas Athena will beat you down under my spear', or (Odysseus to Calypso in *Odyssey* 5.221–222) 'And if some god batters me far out on the wine-blue water, I will endure it, keeping a stubborn spirit inside me'. These abound throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. A special group, consisting of the so-called 'table of contents' speeches, in which (divine) characters explain their plans to other characters, inform the narratees about what they can expect in upcoming books. A clear example is Athena's speech in *Odyssey* 1.81–95, which delineates the events of books 1–5: the encouragement of Telemachus in book 1; the Ithacan assembly in book 2; Telemachus' visit to Nestor in Pylos and to Menelaus in Sparta in books 3–4; and Hermes' mission in book 5.³³

³¹ Other examples: *Il.* 4.160–168; 6.447–465; 7.401–402; 22.487–507; 24.244–246, 727–738; (death of Achilles:) 18.59–60, 89–93, 95–96, 98–120, 329–332, 440–441, 464–465; 19.328–330, 409–417, 421–422; 20.127–128, 337; 21.110–113, 277–280; 22.359–360; 23.80–81, 125–126; 144–151; 24.85–86, 131–132.

³² Cf. Kullmann 1968.

³³ Other examples: *Od.* 5.30–42; 13.393–415.

Prolepses, like analepses, may take the form of embedded focalization; for example, Athena broke the waves ‘until Odysseus would meet with the oar-loving Phaeacians, having escaped death’ (*Od.* 5.385–386); Athena’s focalization, in the form of a final clause, announces Odysseus’ arrival at the island of the Phaeacians.³⁴

Because the Homeric narrator is omniscient, his prolepses in general are reliable, unlike the actorial ones, which, being based on feelings rather than knowledge, need not come true. Thus when the narrator anticipates Sarpedon’s death (*Il.* 16.460–461), we know it will happen (which it does in 16.479–503), but when Achilles threatens to sail home (*Il.* 1.169–171; 9.356–363), this does not happen. However, this distinction is not absolute, and characters—notably gods, seers, or dying heroes—also make reliable prolepses, for example Athena, who announces to Telemachus the death of the suitors (*Od.* 15.31–32).³⁵ Conversely, the narrator may employ the technique of misdirection, for example by inserting the duel between Paris and Menelaus in book 3 and for a time suggesting that the war—and hence his story—may come to a peaceful end.³⁶

A special form of anticipation, which is strictly speaking not a prolepsis, since the story has not started yet, is the proem, which gives an indication, though not a full synopsis, of the story which follows: the wrath of Achilles, which will lead to the deaths of many (no specific mention is made of the deaths of Patroclus and Hector, nor of the remarkable encounter between Priam and Achilles), and the return of Odysseus (no mention of the killing of the suitors).³⁷ While deceptively similar, the proems of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* nevertheless differ as regards their temporal make-up: both herald the theme of the narratives to follow, but the Iliadic proem announces events which, when the story starts, have yet to take place (the wrath of Achilles, which will lead to the death of many Trojans and Greeks), while the Odyssean proem announces events which have already taken place (Odysseus’ long wanderings which ended with the loss of all his companions and ships). In the *Iliad* the transition from proem to the starting point of the story is effected by means of an epic regression (the narrator first going back in

³⁴ For Athena’s proleptic embedded focalization in the *Odyssey* see de Jong 2001a: ad 3.77–78. Other examples: *Il.* 15.596–602; 16.644–655.

³⁵ Examples: *Il.* 12.215–229; 15.56–77; 16.707–709, 852–854; 18.59–60; 20.339; 22.359–360; *Od.* 4.561–569; 11.100–137; 15.172–178; 20.351–357, 367–370.

³⁶ Cf. Morrison 1992.

³⁷ Bassett 1923; van Groningen 1946; Redfield 1979.

time and then forward again), while in the *Odyssey* the narrator starts his story at the point where the proem ended, marking the relation between the two sections by *entha* ‘then’/‘there’.

The abundance of prolepses, together with the fact that the Homeric epics deal with traditional tales, has led many scholars to contend that the notion of suspense is absent from these narratives: at no time are the narratees in the dark as to how the story is going to end.³⁸ In my view, this thesis should be modified:³⁹ it is true that the narratees can count on Hector to die in the *Iliad* and Odysseus to come home in the *Odyssey*, but there are nevertheless moments of suspense, because (1) the exact how and when of the denouement are not disclosed beforehand (how is Patroclus going to die, how is Odysseus going to kill the suitors?); (2) characters are often ignorant of their future, and when sharing their hopes and fears, the narratees may for the moment be less conscious of their foreknowledge (e.g. when Achilles in *Iliad* 21 or Odysseus in *Odyssey* 5 expects to drown); (3) the expected or announced outcome may be postponed (e.g. when Achilles’ revenge on Hector is thwarted by his nearly fatal encounter with the river Scamander, 21.228–289);⁴⁰ (4) the narrator may spring a genuine surprise on his narratees (when Odysseus uses the bow of the contest to kill the suitors); finally, (5) he may insert an open end as in *Odyssey* 13.125–187, where we are never told whether Poseidon, after petrifying the ship of the Phaeacians, also executes the second part of his plan, to cover the city of the Phaeacians with a mountain.

Combinations

Thus far, for the sake of clarity, I have dealt with the Homeric analepses and prolepses separately. Often, however, they are combined in various effective ways. In the first place, we have the juxtaposition of narratorial and actorial *analepses*, for example in *Iliad* 21, where first the narrator informs us that the young Trojan Lycaon had been taken captive by Achilles, sold on Lemnos, and then bought free by a guest-friend (35–

³⁸ E.g. Auerbach [1946] 1953: 4; S. Richardson 1990: 133.

³⁹ Cf. Schmitz 1994 and Rengakos 1999.

⁴⁰ This form of suspense is discussed by Morrison 1992 under the headings of ‘false anticipation’ (‘when the narrator introduces true, persuasive predictions, yet the fulfillment of such predictions is unexpectedly postponed’) and epic suspense (when untraditional episodes are inserted which conflict with the narratees’ expectations).

46), then Achilles in surprise asks himself how Lycaon managed to escape from Lemnos (57–59), and finally Lycaon himself refers to the fact that Achilles sold him on Lemnos, in the hope that he would again take him alive (76–82). All of this prepares for the tragic outcome of this encounter: enraged by the death of his friend, this time Achilles shows no mercy and kills Lycaon. Another effect is created in *Odyssey* 2, where a narratorial analepsis informs us that one of the sons of the Ithacan Aegyptius has been killed by the Cyclops (19–20), while the father himself, unaware of this fact, expresses his hope that there is news of the return of Odysseus and his son (30–31).⁴¹

In the second place, narratorial and actorial *prolepses* may be effectively combined, as when Achilles prays for Patroclus' safe return (*Il.* 16.233–248), but the narrator, in the form of Zeus' negative response to this prayer, reveals that this will not be the case (16.249–252).

In the third place, some of the major events of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are anticipated by narrator and characters alike, who also look back on them later, resulting in a dense network of narratorial and actorial *prolepses* and *analepses*. A prime example is the death of Hector, which is anticipated by the narrator (15.612–614; 16.799–780; 22.5) and characters alike (6.409–410, 501–502 (embedded focalization); 15.68; 16.852–854; 17.201–208; 18.132–133, 334–335; 21.294–297), and then looked back on by characters (24.214–216, 384–385, 499–501).

In the fourth place, there is the device of the 'recalled prophecy', for example when Alcinous recalls the prophecy by his father Nausithous, which foretold that Poseidon one day would smite a ship of the Phaeacians while on their way home from escorting a stranger (8.564–571). Here we find the combination of an analepsis containing a prolepsis.⁴² Typically, such proleptic analepses are inserted at the moment the prophecy comes true.

Long embedded narratives, which are themselves analepses, may also contain prolepses and analepses. Thus a secondary narrator like Odysseus within the course of his Apologue (itself an external actorial analepsis) both anticipates events ('Listen to what I say, companions, though you are suffering evils, while I tell you the prophecies of Tiresias and Circe. Both have told me many times over to avoid the island of Helios, who brings joy to mortals, for there they spoke of the most dreadful disaster that waited for us', 12.271–275) and looks back on

⁴¹ Another example: *Il.* 11.123–125 + 139–141.

⁴² De Jong 2001a: ad 2.171–176, where more examples.

them ('Dear friends, this [Charybdis] is no greater evil than it was when the Cyclops had us cooped in his hollow cave by force and violence, but even there by my counsel and my intelligence we escaped', 12.208–212).

Simultaneity and parallel storylines

A specific Homeric device for handling time in connection with parallel storylines is what has become known as 'the law of Zielinski'.⁴³ It consists of two parts. (1) The Homeric narrator does not retrace his steps: when he moves from one storyline to another, time ticks on and storyline B continues where storyline A left off; while one storyline is in the foreground, the other remain stationary, that is, time ticks on, but nothing important happens. (2) When two storylines are announced; for example, when a character issues two orders, their fulfillment is told successively, but they *should in fact be thought of as occurring simultaneously*; thus Zielinski reconstructs a *real* action, as opposed to the *apparent* action which we find in the text. The first part of this law is by and large correct and is also known as the 'continuity of time' principle. As always, this rule is proved by its exceptions, in that occasionally the narrator does retrace his steps (e.g. in *Il.* 15.390–394; cf. 11.842–12.2)⁴⁴ or important developments do occur in the background (e.g. in *Od.* 15.301–495: while Odysseus and Eumaeus converse, Telemachus manages to sail home safely). The second part of this law is less convincing: in the case of the execution of two orders, successive really means successive, as can be proven by the fact that characters belonging to storyline B react to events from storyline A. For example, in *Iliad* 15.143–262 Zeus summons both Iris and Apollo, then first sends Iris to stop Poseidon from fighting, and then, when the Iris-storyline has been completed, instructs Apollo to revive Hector, referring to the fact that Poseidon has stopped fighting.⁴⁵ An even more famous example is the second divine council in *Odyssey* 5, which does not mean a return in time to the first council of book 1, since Athena, reiterating her plea to help Odysseus,

⁴³ Zielinski 1899–1901.

⁴⁴ Other examples: *Il.* 16.508 (cf. 492–501); *Od.* 16.1–3 (cf. 15.495); and 17.492–493 (cf. 462–465). Cf. Rengakos 1995 and Nünlist 1998b. It should be noted that in most cases the return in time is accomplished in that *characters focalize* an event earlier recounted by the narrator, which 'camouflages' the fact that the narrator is retracing his steps.

⁴⁵ Cf. Patzer 1990 and Rengakos 1995.

now adds the latest developments on Ithaca (5.18–20), which took place in books 2–4.

Of course, should he so wish, the narrator is perfectly capable of presenting simultaneous actions, for example in *Odyssey* 8.438–448, where he explicitly notes that the little scene of Arete handing over a chest to Odysseus takes place *while* the water for his bath is getting warm.⁴⁶ Then there is the technique, already mentioned by Zielinski, of rapid changes of scene, which create an impression of simultaneity. An example is found in *Odyssey* 17.492–606, where the narrator switches rapidly between Penelope's upper room and the *megaron*, where 'the beggar'/Odysseus, the suitors, and Telemachus find themselves.⁴⁷ Finally, there is the most frequent and the most inconspicuous form of simultaneity, namely that conveyed by changes of scene via *men ... de* or similar expressions: since the *men*-clause usually contains a verb in the imperfect, the suggestion is clearly that while we turn to another place or storyline, the action in the first place continues. The Homeric narrator often exploits this simultaneity by contrasting the two actions; for example, 'So the Trojans (*men*), panicked like deer, spread through the city, dried their sweat and slaked their thirst, but the Greeks (*de*) came up closer to the wall ... and his fate shackled Hector to stay outside' (*Il.* 22.1–6).

Rhythm

The Homeric epics, with their large proportion of speech (45 percent in the *Iliad* and 66 percent in the *Odyssey*), contain many scenes. And even when heroes are acting rather than speaking their actions are usually described at a leisured pace and hence scenically. For example, Telemachus' departure for Pylos is narrated in full detail: the bringing of provisions on board, taking their seats, raising the mast, and pouring libations for the gods (*Od.* 2.414–433). As in most narratives, scenes alternate with summaries; thus the scene of Telemachus' departure is capped by a summary: 'all night long and into the dawn the ship ran on her journey' (*Od.* 2.434).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For other instances of simultaneity see de Jong 2001a: ad 8.438–448.

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis see de Jong 2001a: ad loc.; another example is *Odyssey* 4.625–847.

⁴⁸ For discussion and more examples see S. Richardson 1990: 9–30.

The many Iliadic battle-scenes in particular display an effective combination of scene and summary, whereby the narrator starts off and caps such episodes with an impression of the general array, and in between zooms in on the actions of individual warriors. An example is *Iliad* 16.394–637: [summary:] ‘Now when Patroclus had cut through the leading Trojan battalions, he penned them back again towards the ships, and would not allow them their desire to reach their city, but in the space between ships and river and high city-wall he kept charging and killing’ (394–398) ...; there follows a series of individual *scenes* culminating in Patroclus killing Sarpedon (399–631) ...; [summary:] ‘Then like the crashing that arises in the glens of a mountain when woodcutters are at work ... so from the wide-wayed earth rose up the thud and clash of the men’s bronze and well-made ox-hide spears, as they thrust at each other with swords and double-pointed spears’ (631–637).

In the course of a scene the narrator may further slow down his pace and insert a close-up, for example the wounding of Menelaus by Pandarus, which is presented at great length and in great detail (the arrow going through the elaborate belt, the worked corselet, and the skirt-piece, until it scratches the surface of Menelaus’ flesh, *Il.* 4.130–147). A quite horrifying example of slowing down is found when Patroclus is given the first, mortal blow by Apollo (16.791–804) and we hear in harrowing detail how the god strikes his back and shoulder, knocks the helmet from his head, how his ‘long-shadowed spear, huge, heavy, massive, and tipped with bronze’ was shattered in his hand, how his shield dropped and his corselet was broken off. It is as if we are witnessing an arming scene in reverse and slow-motion.

In Homeric scholarship the term ‘retardation’ was introduced by Goethe,⁴⁹ not only to refer to the slowing down of the narrative pace, but also the postponement of an expected event, either by inserting a reversal of the action (e.g. the Trojans, who have the upper hand according to Zeus’ plan, are in books 14.1–15.235 themselves temporarily repulsed), or by interrupting the action (Achilles’ revenge on Hector, which he announces in 18.114–115, is postponed until book 22, through the insertion of numerous incidents, notably the fight with the river Scamander, 21.136–382, and the Theomachy, 21.385–520).

When there is no fabula-time which corresponds to the story-time, we are dealing with a *pause*: the story comes to a standstill. Such pauses

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the term and of examples see Reichel 1990.

are rare in Homer. The only examples are the narratorial external analepses on characters and objects, which were discussed above. As Lessing famously remarked in his *Laokoon*, the Homeric narrator prefers to describe objects dynamically, as in the case of the Shield of Achilles, which is not presented as a finished object, but is described as it is being made by Hephaestus. Another way of avoiding pauses consists in having something focalized by one of the characters. Thus most descriptions of scenery are focalized by characters (e.g. Hermes, taking in the scenery of Calypso's island in *Odyssey* 5.63–75), which means that the story does not come to a complete standstill. Even the description of the Phorcys bay (*Od.* 13.96–112), though focalized by the narrator rather than by one of the characters, is not static, in that at the moment the description starts the ship is said to be approaching the bay (95), while at the moment it ends, the ship has entered it (113).

The reverse of a pause is *ellipsis*: when no story-time corresponds to fabula-time, an event is not recounted at all. This device is employed in the Homeric epics in order to skip relatively unimportant or self-evident events: for example, in *Iliad* 16.432 Zeus speaks with Hera on Mount Ida; earlier (in 15.79) we had been told that Hera went from Mount Ida to the Olympus, so her return from the Olympus to Mount Ida (somewhere between 15.79 and 16.432) has been left out.⁵⁰ But ellipses are also typical of the allusive style of many external analepses: because the stories are well-known, their narrators can leave out details, motives, prehistory, etc., relying on the narratees to fill them in. An example is the story of the battle between the Centaurs and Lapiths, as recounted by Antinous in *Odyssey* 21.295–304: all we are told is that the Centaur Eurytion became drunk in the palace of Peirithous and that a fight ensued; the larger context (the Centaur's attempt to rape Peirithous' bride Hippodamea) is omitted. This allusive style will become typical of choral narration (→ Pindar, → Aeschylus, → Sophocles) and Hellenistic poetry (→ Theocritus).

Taking into account the rhythm of the Homeric epics as a whole, we may note that the *Iliad* starts and ends with summaries (book 1: nine days of plague, nine first days of Achilles' wrath; book 24: nine days of mutilation of Hector's corpse, nine days of gathering wood for Patroclus' burial), while in the middle slows down, when describing the four climactic battle days featuring the death of Patroclus and

⁵⁰ The scholia already noted this phenomenon, which they subsumed under the category *kata to siōpōmenon* (lit. 'according to the unexpressed').

Hector. In the *Odyssey* most summaries are found in book 5 (four days of building the raft, seventeen days of safe journey, two days of storm), while before that we have the series of scenically presented visits by Athena/Mentes (to Ithaca) and Telemachus (to Pylos and Sparta), and afterwards the protracted days of Odysseus' return to his own palace and of the contest of the bow, the killing of the suitors, and the reunion with Penelope.

Frequency

The default form of frequency in the Homeric epics is *singulative*: each event of the main story is recounted once. Indeed, these narratives are singulative to an almost unique degree, in that even the recurrent acts of daily life, retiring to bed, eating, preparing a ship—which most narratives tend to skip except when thematically significant—are presented more or less each time they occur, in the form of type-scenes.

Occasionally the Homeric narrator turns to *iterative* narration, for example when recounting the first days of Achilles' wrath: '[Achilles] sat idle by his speedy ships and kept up his wrath. He never went to the assembly where men win glory, nor into the fighting, but stayed where he was, wasting his heart out day after day, and yearning for the clamour of battle' (*Il.* 1.488–492). Most instances of iterative narration function as summaries,⁵¹ but there is also the special case of simultaneous iterative narration, which is used in connection with the habitual actions of gods; for example, Athena 'took her powerful spear, edged with sharp bronze, heavy, huge, thick, with which she is wont to beat down the battalions of fighting men against whom the daughter of the mighty father is angered' (*Od.* 1.99–101). This narrative mode is found again, in similar divine contexts, in the Homeric hymns (→) and Hesiod (→). Finally there is the iterativity of the similes, which recount recurrent events of all times; for example, 'the Argives roared loud, like the waves on a sheer headland, when the south wind whips them with its coming, and they roar against a jutting cliff' (*Il.* 2.394–397); hence it is customary to speak of the similes as omnitemporal.

When we turn to *repeating* narration, we see that the narrator never employs large scale repetition where the main story is concerned: just

⁵¹ Cf. S. Richardson 1990: 21–30 on iterative summary.

as he (almost) never retraces his steps, he does not go over the same ground twice. We do, however, find small-scale instances, which mainly have to do with the organization of his narrative: he may insert a ‘header’ at the beginning of an episode (e.g. ‘Menelaus took Adrastus alive’, *Il.* 6.37), which is then followed by an elaboration (the narrator explains how Adrastus’ horses had become tangled in the shoots of a tamarisk and Adrastus therefore had to beg Menelaus for his life);⁵² or he may add a concluding recapitulation at the end of an episode (‘Thus commanding he [Agamemnon] went round the ranks of men’, *Il.* 4.250);⁵³ or he may mark off a passage through ring composition at its beginning and end (e.g. ‘But illustrious Odysseus remained in the hall, pondering how, with the help of Athena, he would murder the suitors’, which we find in 19.1–2 and 19.51–52, while in between we hear about what Odysseus is pondering).⁵⁴ The devices of the ‘header’ followed by elaboration, the concluding recapitulation, and ring composition will recur in Hesiod (→), Pindar (→) and Bacchylides (→), and drama, but also in prose texts, such as Herodotus’ *Histories* or in the narrative parts of oratory.

A special—complex—form of ring composition is the device of the ‘epic regression’, which means that a narrator mentions an event, then (in a number of steps or in one go) moves back in time to a certain point, and then (in a number of steps) again moves forward until the first event is reached again. An example is *Iliad* 1.8–305: (D) Apollo caused Agamemnon and Achilles to quarrel (8–9a)—(C) for he sent a plague (9b–10)—(B) because Agamemnon did not treat Chryses with respect (11–12a)—(A) when he came to ransom his daughter (12b–21)—(B’) Agamemnon did not treat Chryses with respect (22–33)—(C’) Apollo sent a plague (34–52)—(D’) Achilles and Agamemnon quarreled (53–305).⁵⁵ This technique is also found in Pindar (→) and the choral lyrics of Aeschylus (→), Sophocles (→), and Euripides (→). Both ring composition and epic regression are also employed by secondary narrators, for example Achilles in *Iliad* 24.602–613 (ring composition) or Nestor in *Iliad* 11.671–761 (epic regression).

⁵² Other examples: *Il.* 3.328–329; 6.156–159; 16.257–258.

⁵³ For more examples see S. Richardson 1990: 31–35 on appositive summary.

⁵⁴ For more examples see van Otterlo 1944.

⁵⁵ Schadewaldt [1938] 1966: 84. This device was already noted by the scholiast, who called it ‘narration in reverse order’. The device is also known as ‘lyric narrative’. It is a form of anachronical narration.

In another form of repetition, narrator and characters deal with the same events, the so-called mirror-story (or internal actorial analepsis). One example is Achilles' report to his mother Thetis on the mission of Chryses, the plague, the quarrel with Agamemnon which led to his wrath, and the carrying away of Briseis (*Il.* 1.370–392), an account which repeats—with interesting changes in focalization—what the narrator had recounted just before (1.12–347).⁵⁶

Finally, there is the repetition of actorial analepses. Different characters may tell the same story, as in the case of the story of Tydeus' embassy to Thebes, which is told by Agamemnon in 4.372–398, Athena in 5.802–808, and Diomedes in 10.285–290.⁵⁷ Although recounting the same story, these passages may vary in greater or lesser detail due to the personalities of speaker and addressee, and the context and purpose of speaking. Occasionally we find the device of 'piecemeal distribution', which means that the narratees only gradually get to hear the whole story. A complex example is the set of stories of the *nostoi* of Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Menelaus in the *Odyssey*, which are distributed over Nestor, Menelaus, and Odysseus, who complement each other. Thus, in the case of Agamemnon, Nestor is able to tell Telemachus that when half of the Greeks departed from Troy, Agamemnon stayed behind (3.130–156) and that having come home he was killed by Aegisthus (3.193–194). The intervening period, Agamemnon's voyage from Troy to Greece is then later filled in by Menelaus (4.512–523).⁵⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that just about the whole arsenal of time-related narrative devices which modern narratology has identified is to be found in Homer. The narrator recounts the main story by and large in chronological order and without retracing his steps, singula-

⁵⁶ Cf. de Jong [1985] 2002 and [1987] 2004: 216–218, where also more secondary literature is given. For other examples see n. 18.

⁵⁷ Cf. Alden 2000: 112–152. Other examples: *Il.* 14.249–261 and 15.18–30 (Hera and Heracles); 5.638–642, 648–651; 7.452–453; 21.441–457 (Laomedon); 18.84–85, 432–434; 24.59–61 (marriage of Thetis and Peleus); *Od.* 2.93–110; 19.138–156; 24.128–150 (Penelope's web); 4.271–289; 8.499–520; 11.523–532 (the Wooden Horse); 19.518–529; 20.66–82 (Pandareus' daughters). For discussion and secondary literature on the Odyssean examples see de Jong 2001a: ad locc.

⁵⁸ Cf. U. Hölscher 1989: 94–102; de Jong 2001a: 591–593. Another example is the gradual revelation of Zeus' will, for which see Duckworth 1933: 39.

tively, and via an alternation of scenes (the greater part of the story) and summaries. His analepses and prolepses are for the most part internal, inserted for the benefit of the narratees and as a means of tightening the structure of his story. His external analepses concern the background of characters and objects, and hence are heterodiegetic. For homodiegetic external analepses and prolepses, which sketch the prehistory and aftermath of the *Iliad*, we must turn to the characters. Thus there is a neat division of labour between narrator and characters.

While the rhythm of epic narration is typically slow (*epische Breite*), external analepses concerning well-known 'mythological' events are told in an elliptic, allusive style, which will become the hallmark of later lyric narrative.